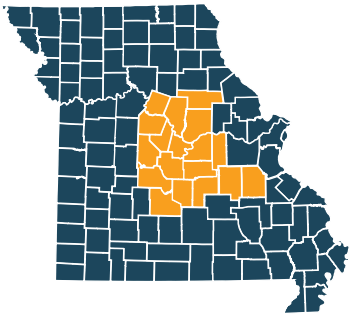


COMMUTING PROFILE
CENTRAL REGION
JULY 2026

Overview

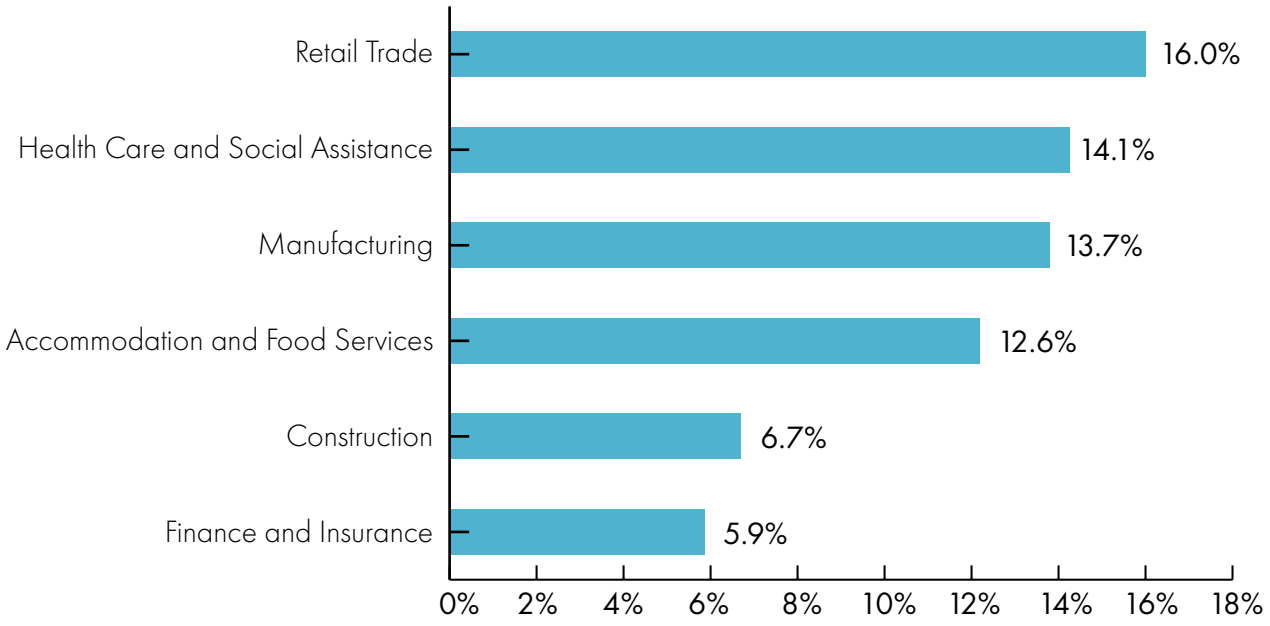
The Central Workforce Development Area (WDA) consists of 19 counties: Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Howard, Laclede, Maries, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski, and Washington. Some of the largest cities in the region include Columbia, Mexico, Rolla, Camdenton, Lebanon, and Jefferson City, the state capital. In 2023, there were 202,592 total private primary jobs** in the Central WDA, making up 8.8 percent of private primary jobs in Missouri. The largest age group of the workforce employed in the Central WDA was 30 to 54 (48.6%), followed by 29 or younger (28.8%), and 55 or older (22.6%). In 2023, 46.7 percent of private primary jobs in the Central WDA paid more than $3,333 per month. Of the remaining jobs, 19.4 percent paid $1,250 per month or less and 33.8 percent paid between $1,251 and $3,333 per month. In 2023, there were more men (52.4%) than women (47.6%) in the Central WDA workforce employed at the private primary jobs.

In 2023, 40.9 percent of employees living in the Central WDA commuted fewer than 10 miles to work, 26.8 percent traveled more than 50 miles to work, 19.7 percent commuted 10 to 24 miles, and 12.6 percent commuted 25 to 50 miles.

Industry

Retail Trade was the largest employing industry in the region with 32,434 jobs (16.0% of total private primary jobs in the region). *Health Care and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Accommodation and Food Services; Construction;* and *Finance and Insurance* were other major industry sectors with a large percentage of the region's employment share. Columbia, Jefferson City, Lebanon, Rolla, and Mexico were the top cities for employment in the Central WDA.

Top Central WDA Industries - Private Primary Jobs Percentage



Where the Central WDA Labor Force Works and Lives

Of the 202,592 workers employed in the Central WDA in 2023, 72.8 percent commuted to work from within the region and 27.2 percent commuted from outside of the region.

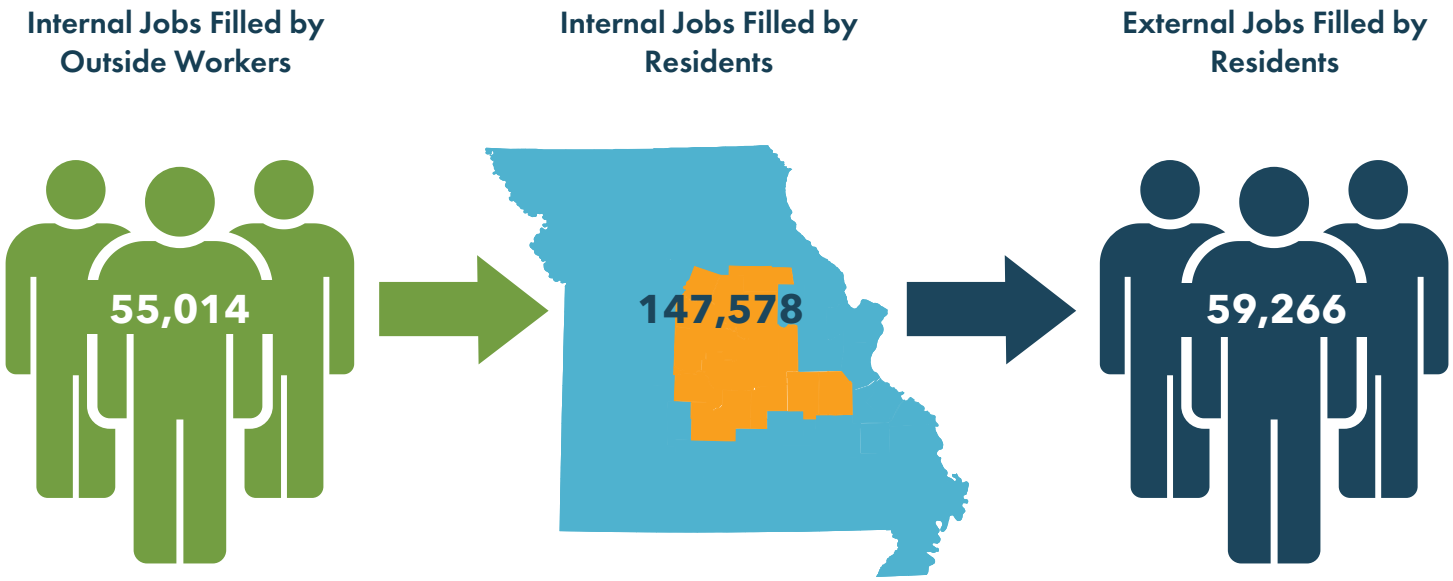
Description	2023	
	Count	Share
Central WDA Labor Market Size (Private Primary Jobs)		
Employed in the Central WDA	202,592	100.0%
Living in the Central WDA	206,844	102.1%
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	-4,252	-
In Area Labor Force Ef ciency (Private Primary Jobs)		
Living in the Central WDA	206,844	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Central WDA	147,578	71.3%
Living in the Central WDA but Employed Outside	59,266	28.7%
In-Area Employment Ef ciency (Private Primary Jobs)		
Employed in the Central WDA	202,592	100.0%
Employed and Living in the Central WDA	147,578	72.8%
Employed in the Central WDA but Living Outside	55,014	27.2%

Of the region's residents who were in the workforce, 28.7 percent, or 59,266, commuted to jobs outside of the region. The Central WDA attracted 55,014 workers from outside the region. More than 147,000 Central WDA residents both lived and worked in the region.

The top five counties where Central WDA workers resided (in descending order) were Boone, Cole, Callaway, Camden, and Laclede. Boone and Cole counties were home to 31 percent of the region's workforce in 2023.

Inflow/Outflow

Overall, 206,844 employees lived in the Central WDA and 202,592 total workers were employed in the region, resulting in a net outflow of 4,252 workers from the region.



The following table shows the worker composition for the job inflow and outflow groups as well as worker characteristics of the interior job flow. Of the 147,578 individuals who lived and worked in the region, 27.7 percent were aged 29 years or younger, 49.6 percent were aged 30 to 54 years, and 22.7 percent were aged 55 years or older. More than half (54.9%) worked in the *Services* industry.

Central WDA Description	2023	
	Count	Share
Outflow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
External Jobs Filled by Residents	59,266	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	17,361	29.3%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	28,684	48.4%
Workers Aged 55 or older	13,221	22.3%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	11,172	18.9%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	18,916	31.9%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	29,178	49.2%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	10,813	18.2%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	19,589	33.1%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	28,864	48.7%
Inflow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
Internal Jobs Filled by Outside Workers	55,014	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	17,384	31.6%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	25,332	46.0%
Workers Aged 55 or older	12,298	22.4%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	12,064	21.9%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	18,609	33.8%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	24,341	44.2%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	9,221	16.8%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	17,988	32.7%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	27,805	50.5%
Interior Flow Job Characteristics (Private Primary Jobs)		
Internal Jobs Filled by Residents	147,578	100.0%
Workers Aged 29 or younger	40,942	27.7%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	73,125	49.6%
Workers Aged 55 or older	33,511	22.7%
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	27,336	18.5%
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	49,885	33.8%
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	70,357	47.7%
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	34,063	23.1%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	32,449	22.0%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	81,066	54.9%

Commuter Pattern

The top five counties where Central WDA workers living in the region are employed at their private primary jobs (in descending order) were Boone, Cole, St. Louis County, Camden, and Phelps. All but Boone, Cole, and Laclede counties had at least half of their resident workers commuting outside their county of residence for work.

The table below indicates that many workers commuted to another county for employment. Larger cities, such as Columbia and Jefferson City in Boone and Cole counties, respectively, attracted workers from the surrounding counties. These counties also had a lower percentage of workers who left the county to find work. The central location in the state, in addition to Interstate and U.S. Highway access, improves the ability of Central Region residents to commute to their workplace.

Central WDA	
Percent of Central WDA Residents Working Outside of Home County	
Audrain	**60%**
Boone	**33%**
Callaway	**70%**
Camden	**52%**
Cole	**46%**
Cooper	**71%**
Crawford	**68%**
Dent	**64%**
Gasconade	**67%**
Howard	**73%**
Laclede	**44%**
Maries	**86%**
Miller	**73%**
Moniteau	**73%**
Morgan	**68%**
Osage	**73%**
Phelps	**54%**
Pulaski	**63%**
Washington	**78%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2023*), URL: https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

**2023 is the latest year for which LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (commuting data) is available from the U.S. Census Bureau. To maintain the consistency of data in this report, all relevant data used is also from 2023, although later data for some data points was available.*

LEHD data infrastructure tracks jobs as its primary unit instead of people. As such, the system naturally captures more than one job per person when available in the data. The **dominant (or primary) job for an individual is defined as the job that earned the individual the most money. Constructed this way, ***the number of primary jobs should be equal to the number of workers.***

This report was prepared by the staff of the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). All data in this report was current at the time of publication and is subject to revision. This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the recipient and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes is permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.